

St. Marys Downtown Development Authority (DDA)
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Meeting Minutes for August 11, 2014

The meeting of the St. Marys DDA was called to order by Straight at 8:32 am.

Members Present: Bill Bruce, Jim Lomis, Gary Straight, Councilman Dave Reilly, and Terry Landreth

Members not Present: Cheri Richter, Charlie Smith,

Guest in attendance: Roger Weaver & Doug Vaught

Staff: Renée Coakley; Executive Assistant

Minutes: The July 14, 2014 meeting minutes were presented by Landreth. Motion to approve the minutes was made by Reilly and seconded by Bruce. All were in favor.

Treasurers Report: Landreth presented the financials which were approved with a motion by Bruce and seconded by Reilly. All were in favor.

Additions to the Agenda: Landreth added Bicycles to the agenda and Straight added GEM Plant/Coastal Georgia Film Alliance to the agenda.

BUSINESS DISCUSSION:

Grants & Applications Update: Weaver reported that the Coastal Incentive Grant (CIG) is complete which is the grant that will be used to finish the dock waterside portion. The Transportation Enhancement (TE) grant is moving slowly. Drawings are complete and currently waiting for a document to submit to GDOT. The Planning Department will also be applying for another CIG in the near future. It may be used for studies for the creation of the marsh walk between the SMIG property and the Weed Street wastewater treatment plant, and/or other projects. The Boating Infrastructure Grant (BIG) is for facilities in the water \$100,000 assigned to state to give out for projects for studies. \$1.5 Million is available for construction i.e. docks, ramps, etc. Both grants are 50/50 matches.

Weaver also reported that SPLOST 7 funds will be used to update downtown streets to extend the street scape on St. Marys Street to the SMIG property. This project will widen the sidewalks and enable businesses/restaurants to have added space for outdoor customers.

Lomis entered the meeting.

Downtown Signage Update: Weaver discussed signage the Wayfinding Project that the City Manager is working on and the signage that the HPC was looking into. Businesses feel sandwich board signs are working for them and would like to see them stay. This item has not gone to council for any changes. There is also ongoing discussion on the use of banners and flags. There is an adhoc committee that is open to the public that will be meeting to aid in signage issues. Several DDA board members expressed their interest in attending a future meeting.

Bicycles: Landreth presented a video regarding putting Georgia on the map for bicycling. In the video Governor Deal discussed statewide bicycle tourism programs. Landreth discussed the importance of bettering the pathways for bicyclists in the area to increase tourism.

GEM Plant/Coastal Georgia Film Alliance: Vaught presented a copy of the Georgia Sources book where St. Marys has a featured page. He noted that the alliance is drawing a lot of attention from Florida in the filming industry. The group Tandem Media that filmed in St. Marys recently is looking for a location that has approximately 25 foot ceilings with office space. The GEM facility was brought to Vaughts' attention as a possible location for them. Straight reported that currently the supplies in the facility are being sold. Gateway Behavioral Health currently owns the property and it may be willing to sell it. Vaught will contact those in charge to determine the feasibility of this idea.

Vaught also mentioned the importance of reopening the Point Peter gate to the naval base. He feels that this would increase the economic impact for the downtown.

Challenge Question Discussion: The challenge question that was posed to the board at the last meeting was how we get people off I95 and into downtown St. Marys. Straight drew a possible plan for tourists of having the Exit 1 welcome center completely upgraded, a rail system leaving from the Epic Center in Kingsland to downtown St. Marys. Once downtown they could visit the product at the former Weed Street Plant. This would include a walkable pathway from the SMIG property. At the SMIG property there would be docking for ships/boats some sort of water taxi or ferry to Cumberland Island and/or possible water tour to Fernandina. The return trip would be a water taxi back to the welcome center at Exit 1.

After further discussion Straight stated that he will type a synopsis of the suggestions and send them to the board.

Adjourn – Meeting adjourned at 10:03 am with motion by Landreth and second by Reilly. All were in favor.

Charlie Smith, Secretary

Prepared by Renée Coakley, Executive Assistant